

Losing a Baby

What is a miscarriage?

The unexpected loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks gestation.

Miscarriage is common. Nearly 1 in 3 pregnant people will experience a miscarriage in their lifetime. Most miscarriages occur in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

What is a stillbirth?

The death of a baby of 20 or more weeks gestation but before the baby is born. Stillbirth can happen during pregnancy or during labour.

The experience of miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or stillbirth may lead to many different emotions. Whatever your feelings, they're normal.

After your delivery, you may choose to hold, cuddle and spend time with your baby. Some families give their baby a bath or dress them. You may choose to have pictures taken, have foot or hand prints made or to bring home other mementoes. Please speak to your hospital social worker or a support staff if you have specific requests about burying or cremating your baby. These may include religious, cultural or spiritual practices.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Most miscarriages happen in the first trimester because the fertilized egg did not develop fully. Miscarriage is not anyone's fault.

Helping You Cope

You need rest, good nutrition, exercise and support to recover from giving birth. It is important to take care of yourself as you grieve. Your health care team may support you with making informed decisions and set up counselling and referrals. After you leave the hospital, you can find support through Elders, public health, spiritual or religious leaders, grief counsellors or support groups and community organizations.

As the person who gave birth, you can expect some specific physical changes to your body. The arrival of your milk may begin as early as 12 weeks of pregnancy. Even though your baby has died, your hormones continue to signal to your body to produce milk. Some people find the presence of milk upsetting and want to dry it up as quickly as possible, while others find it a comforting reminder of the ability to care for the baby they so loved and wished for.

There is no right or wrong way to feel and it is your choice whether to donate your milk or to dry it up. To learn more see "Lactation After Loss" at bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/stillbirth-newborn-loss#Lactation--after--loss

- More information can be found through BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre Miscarriage, Recurrent Pregnancy Loss or After the Loss of Your Baby (bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/stillbirth-newborn-loss#Coping--with--grief) and through HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

- People with lived experience of miscarriage and stillbirth report that peer support is helpful. Talking with a friend or family member or listening to stories about lived experiences on podcasts, such as BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre's Stillbirth Happens – Let's Talk (bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/stillbirth-newborn-loss/podcast-stillbirth-happens), may bring comfort and help you feel less alone as you grieve.

Other resources that can help:

- Coping with ending a pregnancy - bcwomens.ca/health-info/sexual-reproductive-health/abortion-services/coping-with-ending-a-pregnancy
- Miscarriage - bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/miscarriage
- After the loss of your baby - bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/stillbirth-newborn-loss



BC Bereavement Helpline:

Assists families in coping with loss and managing grief

Email: contact@bcbh.ca

Phone: 1-877-779-2223

Website: bcbh.ca

Hope for Wellness Helpline:

Culturally safe support available 24/7 for all Indigenous people across Canada

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Website: hopeforwellness.ca

Having a Baby After a Pregnancy Loss

When you have experienced a pregnancy loss or the death of a baby, another pregnancy can bring mixed emotions. It can also bring a new wave of grief. It is ok if you need more support. You can ask for extra care, monitoring and reassurance.

Share your feelings with your health care team so they can support you to do what is best for you and your family.

Culturally Safe Care

Indigenous hospital and community navigators may help support individuals and their families who identify as Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit or Métis navigate hospital procedures and protocols, connect with resources and support in hospital and in the community and facilitate access to cultural resources. Upon request you can be connected with an Elder who provides emotional and cultural support and counselling for you and your family.



FAMILY & FRIENDS

What You Can Do

The best thing to say to a grieving parent or caregiver may simply be, "I'm so sorry."



WHAT YOU CAN DO

You and your partner may respond differently to the death of a baby. Reach out for help if you need it.

